

The
Play
Manifesto

by Craig Coggle

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Part I

The Question

It's been a long and **tiring day** when I finally get home.

I've come to that point that many **parents** get to.

I'm weary and exhausted and look down at that hopeful, beautiful face of my three year old son as he approaches when I close the door.

His beautiful face sparkles with **excited expectation**.

But I'm tired. Weary from classes and a **commute from hell**.

I just want to sit down and settle.

But I am a father.

What to do?

I deliver a line that is like the last ditch
of family management.

A distraction and a diversion.

'Why don't you go and **play** in your room for a while?'

It's both rhetorical and loaded.
It serves no other purpose than
to allow me to get free of the
tangles in my hair and just **relax for a bit.**

It kills the moment and the excitement sags like a *deflating balloon.*

What a question... Why don't you play for a bit?

Play.

It's obvious why I've used that particular verb.
I could have said: 'Why don't you tidy your room?
Or read a book? Or watch some TV?'

But play offers so many more **possibilities** for
engagement and exploration that I can fool myself
into thinking that I'm actually being a good father
by coming up with such a darned clever suggestion.

Of course, children don't need to be **reminded to play**.

My question should really be to myself:

Why don't *you* play?

And this manifesto is my question now to you:

Why *don't* you play?

Part II

Play

Play...

At least a little **more?**

Play can revive you and boost your energy.

It can ease your worries and calm you.

Play can bond, repair, and **rejuvenate**.

To play is to be curious and to explore.

To be young in mind and **excited** by the world around us.

To play is to create new possibilities and adventures.

To play is to challenge ourselves. To go longer, higher, faster, smoother.

To make fewer mistakes. **To make more mistakes.**

To beat our personal best, to beat their personal best.

To be our personal best.

To be ourselves **in play.**

Being in play feels **authentic and true**.

We all search for truth yet we all feel guilty
when we catch ourselves playing and enjoying ourselves.

I really **should be working**, we say.

I really shouldn't waste time doing this... I've got **things to do**.

We stop ourselves from doing all of the things that we enjoy doing because we feel guilty that we really should be working instead.

The opposite of play is **not work**.

There are many for whom their vocation is carried out playfully, with laughter and enjoyment.

Even the most serious of careers can be approached with an open, questioning and **playful mind**.

We are not compelled to be miserable or serious.

The opposite of play is **not responsibility**.
I can still cover all of my bases with an attitude
of freshness and joy.

No... The opposite of play is **boredom**.

To be bored with life is to **forget how** to play.

Play is as natural as watching a sunset
or throwing stones into the sea.

Play is **tickling** someone you love or
celebrating with a colleague when they've
had a breakthrough.

Play is running as fast as you can just to
feel the **wind through your hair** and the
stretch in your lungs.

Boredom is the resignation that **life is empty.**

That nothing captivates or excites.

I call to you to **play more** in your life, in your relationships, in your home, in your place of work.

Play to leave your mark on the world with **spirit and energy**.

Create a list of things that you love to play at and try and **do one a day**.

Puzzles, video games, dancing, football,
frisbee, climbing trees, whistling,
rolling down hills,
throwing things,
driving things,
building things,
writing things,
baking things...

We don't have to be jokers to play,

though that **can** sometimes work.

We don't have to do extreme sports to play,

though they can be done **playfully**.

We just need to open up to ourselves, **willingly**.

Play doesn't have to be **frivolous or facile**, that's just one part of a much bigger picture.

We can play in love, in business, in sport, in science, in research, in language, in communities, in progress, in teaching, in caring...

But... we can't always be playing you protest. What about when we lose someone and we are **grieving**.

I call for you to play more, if you have forgotten how. When it feels right.

But you know, when we sit with someone as they approach the end of their life, it's okay to smile and to laugh about good times. To play with life and play with death.

Don't get to the end of your life wishing you had **played more**.

Next time you are in the park, just watch
as someone walks across the path of a ball
accidentally kicked their way.

Watch their **energy change**.

Their face lights up with joy.

They immediately set upon it, to kick it,
to **challenge** themselves to place it accurately
back from where it came.

They are **playing**.

So why don't we take a ball to the park and play?

Is it **childish**?

When we play we are not bothered about approval,
instead we are closer to our **authenticity**.

Is it an **irresponsible** thing to do?

Responsibilities are agreements we have made to complete certain fulfillments.
The manner in which we do this is not specified.

We can be **responsible and play.**

Perhaps you don't take a ball to the park because you really shouldn't at your age, especially with your dodgy knee?

Well, you can **play within** any physical limits.

Play is a **mindset**.

Play sitting down if you have to.

Play with others, play in groups.

Take your meeting to the park and chuck a frisbee around.

Get outside to do your planning and jump in a few puddles.

Loosen up a few blockages and **laugh your head off.**

Part III

The Challenge

Can you imagine a world where **people played** more?

Can you imagine how you would **relate**
to others and connect with the people
in your community?

But what state would the world be in if we all just **played all the time?**

You might ask.

Well, that is my **question entirely.**

This manifesto just says... **Let's try it!**

Let's Play.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Craig is a music industry veteran turned education consultant, writer and coach. He recently helped develop and deliver the year long music teacher training programme 'Teach Through Music' and is currently using the power of improvisation and play to create transformation in groups and individuals through his coaching and writing.

His writing has also been featured in Tiny Buddha, Pick the Brain, Change This and the Animas Institute and you can reach him through his blog at craigcoggle.com